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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, AF/E

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [EWWT](#) [SO](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MFA ON VISIT OF SHAYKH SHARIF, PIRACY

REF: CAIRO 737

Classified By: Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs Catherine Hill-Herndon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Key Points:

-- The Egyptian MFA said that Somali President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmed asked for Egyptian support for his government and the Somali joint forces. Egypt agreed to supply uniforms for the forces and is ready to provide training for troops and trainers.

-- The Government of Egypt (GOE) is not currently involved in Somali reconciliation, but if all the parties request it, Egypt is willing to participate.

-- According to the MFA, Shaykh Sharif is not happy about the intervention or intrusion of international forces into Somali territory and he asked Egypt to help the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) obtain capacity building support from the international community.

-- Egypt wants to set a date for Working Group (WG) 4 of Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) to meet in late May. The MFA alerted us that China will propose, at the WG 1 meeting, dividing the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean into "areas of responsibility" for each navy to create a more effective system that will allow for better command and control coordination.

12. (C) Comment: We were surprised by the Egyptian assertion that the TFG had not asked for Egyptian help in facilitating reconciliation talks. According to the Somali DCM in Cairo, the TFG asked for Egypt's assistance to broker rapprochement between Shaykh Sharif and Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys (reftel). After taking the lead in strongly supporting the election of Shaykh Sharif, Egypt is reverting to its traditional, risk averse position of not taking the lead on reconciliation efforts. Egypt will probably quietly push countries to support Shaykh Sharif, the TFG, and the Somali joint forces, but will probably hedge its bets by not taking a public stance. The GOE is still convinced that the role of WG 4 of the CGPCS will be to fund socio-economic projects in Somalia and it is anxiously anticipating the U.N briefing. Egypt will try to get an idea of the content of the briefing before the plenary session on May 29. End Comment.

Shaykh Sharif's Visit to Cairo

13. (C) Egypt MFA cabinet officer for African Affairs, Ahmed Abu Zeid, told us on May 4 that Somali President Shaykh Sharif's visit to Cairo was "important" because he met with President Mubarak and received the "official support" of Egypt. He said that Mubarak gave Shaykh Sharif "advice on the future course of Somalia." Shaykh Sharif asked for Egyptian support for his government and the Somali joint

forces. Abu Zeid stated that Egypt believes it is important to build the capacity of both the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Somali joint forces. He told us that the GOE is ready to support the training of Somali troops and trainers to "build a credible, strong, and efficient Somali force." Abu Zeid said that the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa (EFTCA) agreed to provide the Somali joint forces with uniforms.

14. (C) Abu Zeid told us that Egypt is not involved in Somali reconciliation because it did not want to be involved in a "game" where its role would not be "helpful or welcomed." He stated that Shaykh Sharif has his own reconciliation process, and Egypt believes that the process should be driven internally by the Government of Somalia. Abu Zeid said that Egypt feels the TFG needs to set up "direct talks" with the opposition. However, he told us that Egypt is ready to be involved in the reconciliation process, if asked by the various groups. Abu Zeid told us multiple times during the meeting that the GOE has good relation with all the parties in Somalia and is in "daily contact" with them. He stated that Qatar had offered to mediate between the Somali groups and he opined that this was the "wrong course" because the Somalis needed to be "given space." Abu Zeid said that Shaykh Sharif requested that Egypt help the TFG obtain support from the international community to increase the TFG's ability to tackle piracy. He said that Shaykh Sharif is not happy about the intervention or intrusion of international forces into Somali territory.

Preparing for the CGPCS Meetings

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15. (C) Abu Zeid told us that the GOE was looking to set a date for Working Group (WG) 4 of the CGPCS sometime in late May, and it would make a decision in the "next few days." He said that the WG would only focus on a communications strategy because Egypt is waiting for the U.N. presentation at the plenary session on May 29 to address the socio-economic needs in Somalia before proceeding with other parts of the WG's mandate. The Chinese Embassy informed Abu Zeid that the Chinese delegation to WG 1 in London will propose to divide the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean into "areas of responsibility" for each navy. According to Abu Zeid, China believes that this will create a system that is more effective and will allow for better command and control coordination.

16. (C) Abu Zeid told us that Egypt is willing to have discussions about arming ships that transit through the "pirate waters." However, he said that the GOE has reservations about the idea because it increases the potential for the exchange of fire between vessels and pirates, putting sailors in danger. He said that any decision on arming ships would ultimately be taken by the Egyptian Ministry of Defense and the Egyptian intelligence services.

SCOBAY